AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network comprising a plurality of private exchange nodes, each of the nodes being capable of communicating with all other nodes in normal operation via two-way communications trunks interconnecting some of the nodes in pairs, the method comprising:

detecting faulty operation that leads to the network becoming split into at least two network portions which can no longer communicate with each other via any of the trunks of the private communications network;

implementing emergency means which provide at least one dynamic access for ensuring that all of the nodes of the network can again communicate with all of the other nodes, thereby maintaining a set of services proposed by the network in normal operation; ~~and~~

transmitting calls through the network using routing that is static and predetermined once the emergency means have been implemented; and

restricting signals passing between the at least two network portions once the emergency means have been implemented.

2. (previously presented): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network according to claim 1, further comprising defining a set of network nodes from which the dynamic accesses are available prior to any faulty operation giving rise to the network being split.

3. (previously presented): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network according to claim 1, wherein the dynamic access is implemented only to satisfy a call request between two nodes that can no longer be connected together once the network has split.

4. (original): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network according to claim 1, wherein the static routing defines a single access path between a sending node and a destination node, the single access path being stored in the sending node and in the destination node.

5. (previously presented): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network according to claim 1, further comprising releasing the dynamic accesses as soon as the faulty operation that caused the network to split has ceased and the last call supported by the dynamic accesses has finished.

6. (previously presented): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network according to claim 2, wherein the emergency means comprise modems disposed at the nodes defined prior to any faulty operation and from which dynamic access is available.

7. (previously presented): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network according to claim 1, wherein the emergency means utilizes Ethernet links.

8. (previously presented): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network according to claim 1, wherein the emergency means utilizes a B channel on an access of a communications circuit.

9. (new): A method of maintaining communications options within a private communications network according to claim 1, wherein the signals are restricted such that a minimum of number of signals pass between the at least two network portions so as to ensure that all of the nodes of the network can communicate with all of the other nodes.